

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-11 (Canceled)

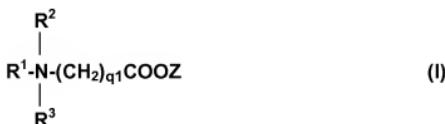
12. (Currently Amended): A concentrated, aqueous, low-viscosity surface-active preparation, comprising

- (a) 25 to 50% by weight of amphoteric or zwitterionic surfactants and,
- (b) 0.01 to 5% by weight of at least one alkali metal sulfate,
- (c) optional electrolyte salts, and
- (d) water,

wherein the quantities of said surfactants, alkali metal sulfates, salts and water add up to 100% by weight with the proviso that the quantities add up to 100% by weight with water and optionally other electrolyte salts.

13. (Previously Presented): The preparation according to claim 12, wherein the amphoteric or zwitterionic surfactants are selected from the group consisting of alkyl betaines, alkyl amidobetaines, aminopropionates, aminoglycinates, imidazolinium betaines and sulfobetaines.

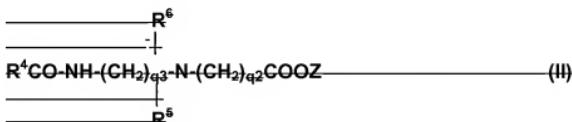
14. (Withdrawn): The preparation according to claim 13, wherein alkyl betaines have the formula (I):



in which R^1 is an alkyl or alkenyl group containing 6 to 22 carbon atoms, R^2 is hydrogen or an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms, R^3 is an alkyl group containing 1 to 4

carbon atoms, q1 is a number of 1 to 6, and Z is an alkali metal, an alkaline earth metal or ammonium.

15. (Currently Amended): The preparation according to claim 13, wherein the alkyl amidobetaines have the formula (II):



in which R⁴CO is an aliphatic acyl group containing 6 to 22 carbon atoms and 0 or 1 to 3 double bonds, R⁵ is hydrogen or an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms, R⁶ is an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms, q₂ is a number of 1 to 6, q₃ is a number of 1 to 3, and Z is an alkali metal, an alkaline earth metal or ammonium.

16. (Previously Presented): The preparation according to claim 12, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is selected from sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate and mixtures thereof.

17. (Previously Presented): The preparation according to claim 12, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is sodium sulfate.

18. (Previously Presented): The preparation according to claim 12, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is present in the amount of 0.1 to 3% by weight.

19. (Currently Amended): The preparation according to claim 12, having a Brookfield viscosity, as measured in an RVT viscosimeter (20°C, spindle 1, 10 r.p.m.), of less than 5,000 mPas-millipascal-seconds.

20. (Currently Amended): The preparation according to claim 12, having a Brookfield viscosity, as measured in an RVT viscosimeter (20°C, spindle 1, 10 r.p.m.), of 1,000 to 2,500 mPas-millipascal-seconds.

21. (Withdrawn): A process for the production of a concentrated, low-viscosity, surface-active preparation, said process comprising forming one or more amphoteric or zwitterionic surfactants by betainizing at least one fatty amine or fatty acid amidoamide with at least one halocarboxylic acid or alkali metal salt thereof in the presence of at least one alkali metal sulfate.

22. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 21, wherein the resulting low-viscosity surface-active preparation comprises

- (a) 25 to 50% by weight of one or more amphoteric or zwitterionic surfactants and
- (b) 0.01 to 5% by weight of at least one alkali metal sulfate,

with the proviso that the quantities add up to 100% by weight with water and optionally other electrolyte salts.

23. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 21, wherein, wherein the resulting one or more amphoteric or zwitterionic surfactants are selected from the group consisting of alkyl betaines, alkyl amidobetaines, aminopropionates, aminoglycinates, imidazolinium betaines and sulfobetaines.

24. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 21, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is selected from sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate and mixtures thereof.

25. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 22, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is present in the amount of 0.1 to 3% by weight.

26. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 21, wherein the resulting low-viscosity surface-active preparation has a Brookfield viscosity, as measured in an RVT viscosimeter (20°C, spindle 1, 10 r.p.m.), of less than 5,000 mPas.

27. (Withdrawn): A process for reducing the viscosity of a water-containing paste of alkyl betaines and/or alkyl amidobetaines having a Brookfield viscosity, as measured in an RVT viscosimeter (20°C, spindle 1, 10 r.p.m.), of greater than 5,000 mPas, said process comprising adding at least one alkali metal sulfate to the water-containing paste.

28. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 27, wherein the resulting reduced-viscosity, water-containing paste comprises

- (a) 25 to 50% by weight of alkyl betaines and/or alkyl amidobetaines and
- (b) 0.01 to 5% by weight of at least one alkali metal sulfate,

with the proviso that the quantities add up to 100% by weight with water and optionally other electrolyte salts.

29. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 27, wherein the alkyl betaines and/or alkyl amidobetaines are selected from the group consisting of alkyl betaines, alkyl amidobetaines, aminopropionates, aminoglycinates, imidazolinium betaines and sulfobetaines.

30. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 27, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is selected from sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate and mixtures thereof.

31. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 28, wherein the at least one alkali metal sulfate is present in the amount of 0.1 to 3% by weight.

32. (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 27, wherein the resulting reduced-viscosity, water-containing paste has a Brookfield viscosity, as measured in an RVT viscosimeter (20°C, spindle 1, 10 r.p.m.), of 1,000 to 2,500 mPas.